

November 22, 2022

## Women RISE Initiative Sparks an International Collaboration to Improve the Resilience of Self-Employed Young Women in Nigeria



*The ARISE&WIN Project aims to understand the gendered impact of COVID-19 on young self-employed Nigerian women and will co-produce solutions that foster better systems and wellbeing*



*(From L-R: Dr. Olayinka Omigbodun, Srividya Iyer, Mrs. Funmilayo Akinpelu)*

We are happy to announce that Dr. Srividya Iyer, Psychologist and Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at McGill University and the Douglas Research Centre, will partner with Dr. Olayinka Omigbodun, Professor of Psychiatry and Provost of the College of Medicine, University of Ibadan (CoMUI) and her team on a project to improve resiliency in self-employed young women in Nigeria. This project enjoys strong partnership with the leadership of the Oyo State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Inclusion, who nominated Mrs. Funmilayo Akinpelu, Head of the Gender Unit in the Women's Programmes Department, as Decision (Policy) Maker on this project. Other key partners are *Abeni Prints, Nigeria* with Ms. Oluwatomisin Abolade Owoade, a self-employed young female CEO and the *Dawn Commission, Nigeria* with Dr. Olusade Taiwo as focal person.

Professor Olayinka Omigbodun revealed her excitement on being informed about the award: *"I received the great news about the award of this grant on August 30, 2022, while I was attending a meeting at the World Health Organisation in Geneva on the Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP). The mhGAP programme, which I am delighted to have been involved in right from the inception, had helped to close the treatment gap for mental disorders in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) over the years, but there is still much to be done. As I read the email providing information that our efforts had yielded fruit, I felt a surge of excitement and gratitude for the opportunity we have to change the narrative for young self-employed women and their families as we co-produce interventions that will build up resiliency. My mind went back to the peak period of the COVID-19 pandemic. I remembered the young self-employed women who had to shut down their*

*businesses and those who reached out to mental health services because they could not bear things anymore as they struggled with depression and a lack of social support networks due to the lockdowns. I remembered the phone calls for help from many, as a mental health professional. I cast my mind back to the experience of those who had babies during this period who had to resort to appealing to friends and family for funds for survival. I also remembered the support groups we formed on WhatsApp to stay in touch with clients, as well as the online psychotherapy we tried out. There were so many formal and informal emergency activities and programmes we had to put in place as we navigated the difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic.”*

Professor Omigbodun elaborated further: *“We were privileged as a team to have access to the doctoral work of Iyeyinka Kusi-Mensah, who had collected qualitative and quantitative data in Ibadan from self-employed young women and men during the COVID -19 pandemic. I remembered the young self-employed women we brought together to co-produce our theory of change map template, which was so helpful as we put the proposal together. I am even more excited because the opportunities the grant offers our truly diverse team to co-produce and create with self-employed young women are enormous”.*

Srividya Iyer from McGill University shares this excitement, particularly for the partnership that was created. She said: *“We know that COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on women, especially in low- and middle-income countries, which has magnified already existing health inequities globally. That is why collaborations like these are vital. I am delighted to be working with partners in Nigeria to understand these impacts and co-produce creative solutions to help young women feel prepared and confident to face future adversities.”*

This large-scale global health project, ARISE&WIN, will help bridge gender inequities gap in health and the labour force by:

1. Leading an analysis of how the COVID-19 pandemic and other significant life events (e.g., childbirth, family/health emergencies) impact the paid or unpaid work and, physical, mental and social wellbeing of self-employed young Nigerian women; their strategies for coping with such events; and how these compare with the experiences of self-employed young men.
2. Co-producing and piloting a scalable intervention to support self-employed young women in Nigeria, so that they can better cope with significant life events that affect their work and well-being.

This project will roll out between 2022-2024 and will use a variety of methods such as interviews, focus group discussions, quantitative secondary data analysis, digital storytelling, policy review, theory of change workshops, and surveys to co-produce and to assess the interventions.

Mrs Funmilayo Akinpelu of the Oyo State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Inclusion was happy about what the project could do to support women, saying: *“Focusing on empowering women, will change not only the lives of women, but jump-start the economy of a nation. Women who believe in themselves can achieve greatness. There is no nation without the women; women are the backbone of nations and are nation builders. Let's support women to arise and fulfill their potentials”.*

Throughout the project, self-employed young women, representatives from the government, community partners and other important stakeholders will work closely with researchers to ensure reach, relevance and results. By providing capacity building, network building, health and wellness, as well as social protection interventions, this collaborative project hopes to empower young self-employed Nigerian women to be better prepared to respond to challenges in the future.

## **Team Members**

Prof. Olayinka Omigbodun (Principal Investigator), *College of Medicine, University of Ibadan, Nigeria; Youth Psychiatry*

Srividya Iyer, Ph.D. (Co-Principal Investigator), *Douglas Research Centre, McGill University, Canada; Psychology*

Mrs Olafunmilayo Akinpelu (Decision-Maker), *Ministry of Women Affairs, Oyo State, Nigeria; Social Work*

Mrs Oluwatomisin Abolade Owoade (Self-employed Partner), *Abeni Prints, Nigeria*

Dr. Olusade Taiwo (Co-Investigator), *Dawn Commission, Nigeria; Economics*

## **Other Investigators:**

*College of Medicine, University of Ibadan*

Professor Ade Fatai Adeniyi (Physiotherapy)

Dr. Funmilola OlaOlorun (Community Medicine & Gender)

Dr. Olayinka Egbokhare (Communication and Language Arts & Gender)

Dr. Joshua Akinyemi (Epidemiology & Statistics)

Mrs Iyeyinka Kusi-Mensah (Sociology)

Mrs Adeola Oluwafunmilayo Afolayan (Youth Mental Health)

Dr. Rita Frinue Tamambang (Youth Mental Health)

Mr. Chuka Victor Ononye (Communication, Media and Youth Mental Health)

Mrs Bukola Agnes Adeoye (Youth Mental Health)

*McGill University, Canada*

Dr. Arijit Nandi; Political Economy of Global Health

## **Oyo State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Inclusion**

Mrs Grace Oderinde, *Permanent Secretary; Social Work*

Mrs Funmilayo Akinpelu; Social Work

Mrs Gbadesire Faith Eyinade; Social Work

## **Entrepreneurs and Other Self- Employed Young Women**

Mrs Oluwatomisin Abolade Owoade, Abeni Prints (Self Employed Young Woman)

Ms. Feyisara Omoniyi Taiwo (Self Employed Young Woman; Youth Mental Health)

Ms. Busola Adeyeye (Self Employed Young Woman; Accounting)



*Some members of the Nigerian Team*

[Watch a short video of showcasing members of the ARISE&WIN team here.](#)

## Partnering Institutions

The College of Medicine, University of Ibadan is Nigeria's foremost institution for the training of health care professionals, research and service delivery in Nigeria. It is situated in Ibadan, Oyo State and is an integral part of the University of Ibadan. The College consists of four Faculties, thirty-six Academic Departments, five Institutes and seven Service Departments. The College of Medicine is closely affiliated with her Sister Institution, University College Hospital, Ibadan. One of the mission statements of the University of Ibadan is to contribute to the transformation of society through creativity and innovation. The mission statement is in perfect synergy with the Arise & Win project.

The Douglas Research Centre is a leading mental health research centre in Quebec, Canada. The Douglas Centre integrates care, research and teaching to transform mental health care services and outcomes. The Douglas is affiliated with McGill University and is a Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization Collaborating Centre. For more information, please follow @DouglasResearch, @McGill\_SPGH and @McGillMed on Twitter.

This grant will receive approximately \$1million from the [Women RISE](#) initiative to implement an action-oriented research project, focused on the intersection of young self-employed women's health and their (paid/unpaid) work in the context of preparedness, response and recovery from COVID-19. This grant is funded by the International Development Research Centre, Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

## Media Contact:

Nigeria: Olayinka Egbokhare & Chuka Ononye ([arise.win2022@com.ui.edu.ng](mailto:arise.win2022@com.ui.edu.ng); [arise.win2022@gmail.com](mailto:arise.win2022@gmail.com))  
Canada: Catherine Lau ([catherine.lau.comtl@ssss.gouv.qc.ca](mailto:catherine.lau.comtl@ssss.gouv.qc.ca))



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